GOLDEN GARDENS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CALIFORNIA GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

Vol. 3-19 November-December 2026

HAPPY THANKSGIVING & HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



California Garden Clubs, Inc.
a member of
National Garden Clubs, Inc.
and
Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc.

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OFFICIAL CALENDAR

Check the CGCI Calendar for links to brochures, flyers, registration forms, etc. For schools in other states, check the NGC website. See CGCI Calendar for club, affiliate, associate plant society, and district "special" events which are open to the public.

2027

- **Jan. 25-27**, CGCI Winter Board Meeting, Virtual
- **April 5-8**, PRGC Convention, Portland, Oregon
- **May 13-17**, NGC 96th Convention, Madison, Wisconsin
- **June 7-10**, CGCI 95th Convention, Redding, California

UPCOMING DEADLINES

- December 1: Award entries and most Youth Contest entries
- January 10: Remainder of Award entries
- January 15: Renewal of General Liability Insurance
- January 15: Renewal of Group Tax Exemption
- January 15: Scholarship applications
- January 20: Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest entries

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Submit articles to the Editor by the 20th of December, February, April, June, and October.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Members,

What an unusually hot autumn most of California has experienced, complete with high temperatures and wildfires throughout the state. Fortunately, a cooler, rain-filled winter is on its way. Let's all hope that the predicted "Super El Niño" destined for California provides us with much-needed rain, while sparing us from severe beach erosion, landslides, and major flooding.

From the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, your president sends warm seasonal greetings from the steps of our 40th President's Air Force One plane on display. California Garden Clubs, Inc. was honored to serve as the host for the 82nd Annual Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc. (PRGC) Convention, held on October 12–14, 2026, in Thousand Oaks, California. In addition to visiting the Reagan Presidential Library, tour programs featured visits to the Strathearn Historic Park & Museum in Simi Valley and the Teaching Zoo at Moorpark College. Convention attendees enjoyed a workshop extravaganza filled with wonderful ideas to take back to their local clubs. Of course, we also integrated plenty of fun into the schedule with challenging game and bingo nights—complete with complimentary popcorn and candy!

The convention offered inspiring speakers at every meal, celebrating bugs, flora, PRGC Life Membership honorees, and annual awards. The event brought together Pacific Region Director Tanja Swanson, regional state presidents, garden club members, and friends from across our entire Pacific Region. We were especially honored that National Garden Clubs, Inc. President Donna Donnelly attended for part of the convention, giving an inspiring speech and taking time to meet and mingle with our members.

Finally, a convention of this scale requires extraordinary vision, planning, and dedication. We extend our most sincere thanks to our PRGC Convention Chairman, Robin Pokorski, and her incredible team of volunteers. Their countless hours of hard work behind the scenes set the stage for an unforgettable gathering. Thank you all!

I wish each of you a happy and healthy holiday season. As we look forward to the New Year, please note that the Call to the CGCI Winter Board Meeting will be distributed in mid-December. Mark your calendar now for the meeting, which will take place January 25-27, 2027, via Zoom.

Warm holiday wishes,

Adele Kelly

HOLIDAY TRADITION – THE MAJESTIC AMARYLLIS

By M. Karin Matray of Red Bluff Garden Club



Have you started an amaryllis for your holiday décor yet? The amaryllis forcing kits become available everywhere after Halloween. They make welcome holiday gifts for a friend or for yourself. You can actually see the plants growing in those paper boxes at the grocery store or big box nursery – no water, no light, just nature's magic. I am always tempted to buy more than one.

The amaryllis, often associated with the holidays, traces its origins to South America. The genus *Hippeastrum* is commonly grown in homes, although the name "amaryllis" has also been used to refer to species native to Africa. Known for their large, trumpet-shaped flowers, the amaryllis is beloved for its beauty and for its ease of care. Historically, the flower's name is rooted in Greek mythology, inspired by a shepherdess named Amaryllis whose love for a shepherd bloomed as vibrantly as the plant that now bears her name. Amaryllis is also a Greek verb which means 'to sparkle' -- very in keeping with this festive season, when we seem to throw glitter and lights on everything.

Beautiful as they might become, the boxed kits do not provide much bulb variety. You will be fortunate if you choose a flower color. Another commonly found option is a waxed amaryllis bulb. No planting or watering is necessary. They are happy bloomers in their cozy and colorful waxed coating.

The best bet, however, is to buy your amaryllis bulbs at a garden supply store or online from a nursery specializing in bulbs. These bulbs will produce a larger, heartier plant and flower. The suppliers are abundant, and the choices are beyond varied – they can be breathtaking. From deep crimson reds to soft pastel pinks, whites, and stripes, the amaryllis comes in a dazzling array of colors and patterns. Popular varieties include:

- *Red Lion*: with classic crimson petals. Photo above (source: https://www.dutchgrown.com)
- *Apple Blossom*: offering delicate white petals with pink edges. Photo on the right (source: https://www.dutchbulbs.com)
- *Clown*: boasting bold red and white striped petals.
- *Minerva*: a true showstopper with vivid red petals and a white star-shaped center.



Planting a bulb is easy – soak the roots in water to rehydrate, select a pot that is cozy (choose a decorative container that is not too big – they like to be cramped), use potting mix, and place the bulb so about a third of it is above the soil line. Place it in a bright (not too sunny) spot and do not overwater. Turn your pot every few days to ensure a straight stalk. You will be rewarded with growth in a week or so, and a beautiful amaryllis flower will emerge after about six weeks.

Once your amaryllis has finished blooming, resist the temptation to discard the bulb. After the flowers fade, cut the stalk down to about an inch above the bulb, but keep the leaves intact. These leaves help the bulb replenish its energy. You can maintain the plant through the following year by just providing sunlight and enough water to keep the soil moist, not wet. In late summer, remove the bulb from the soil and place it in a cool, dark place. After 2 to 3 months, repot your bulb and start the forced blossoming process anew. After holiday blooming, I plant my spent bulbs in my backyard turtle garden. They do well in our outdoor environment and are reliable annual bloomers, bright and glorious around Mother's Day in May.

Perhaps related to its place in holiday tradition, the amaryllis is often associated with success achieved after a struggle. The bulb, buried in dark soil, represents the potential that lies within each of us. The majestic flower symbolizes the beauty and strength that can emerge from our struggles. It is the perfect metaphor from Mother Nature for the start of a new calendar year.

AUTUMN LEAF CHANGES

By Sharon Rossi of Petaluma Garden Club



As daylight hours grow shorter and leaves turn from green to brilliant hues, our hearts let go of the warmth of summer and embrace the coming of the colder months. Yellow, orange, and red autumn leaves, brilliant against blue skies, usher in the season.

We love the glow of autumn leaves, but did you know that deciduous trees are recycling valuable nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium by breaking down their green leaves? As the days grow shorter and the temperatures colder, deciduous trees stop producing chlorophyll. Those gorgeous autumn pigments are always present in the leaves, masked by the green chlorophyll, and when the chlorophyll is no longer produced, the other colors appear!

Complex molecules in the leaves break down into smaller soluble ones, such as sugars and amino acids, which are then recycled and absorbed by the tree for use in the spring. Those brilliant tree-leaf pigments of autumn also help protect the tree from pests and from exposure to ultraviolet light.

In autumn, the trees begin to produce hormones to initiate leaf senescence, which includes the formation of the abscission layer, which forms at the base of each leafstalk and severs the flow of materials between the leaf and the tree. So, take some time to enjoy the autumn color show now, and then let it go, for the joys of winter lie ahead.

Here are some suggestions for further reading about the process of autumn leaf changes:

- https://ucanr.edu/blog/landscape-horticulture-updates-southern-california/article/fall-colors-explained
- https://ucanr.edu/county/kern-county/autumn-color-development-plant-foliage
- https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing/2019-10-08-why-do-tree-leaves-change-color-autumn

Autumn shows us how beautiful it is to let things go.

GIVE A GREEN-ISH, SAFE-ISH HOLIDAY GIFT

By Maria Orefice, Member of Southern California Garden Club

The holiday gift-giving season is upon us once again. It is possible to give a present that is sustainable, which your friends and family can enjoy all year long . . . why not a plant—the perfect gift from a gardener. But not just any plant, one that is enjoyable, easy to maintain, yet safe for our pets. There are many beautiful plants that will not hurt our furry friends, are beautiful, and will be enjoyed by non-pet owners as well.



Here is a list of pet-safe plants recommended by our friends at Chewy.com:

- Christmas cactus: For those celebrating Christmas, this cactus is bred to bloom this time of year. Under ideal conditions, there may be two blooms, possibly one in the spring.
- Rosemary: It can be planted in our warm climate outside to enjoy all year long. It's pretty, drought-tolerant, rugged, and is flavorful in many recipes. Rosemary is often grown and trimmed during the holidays to look like a small Christmas tree.
- Orchids: Available all year long, these plants make stunning gifts. For a fun holiday day trip, visit an orchid farm in Carpinteria, such as Gallup and Stribling Orchids. They have orchids as far as the eye can see, as well as cactus, succulents, houseplants, and much more. Visit its website to see the plants they sell and learn about upcoming workshops.
- Boston fern: Famous for hanging in bars (remember the fern bar?), these green, leafy plants are easy to maintain indoors or outside with care.
- Camellia: A great plant for a camellia collector or someone who loves their fragrance. Many bloom in the winter and make a beautiful gift.
- African violets: An old-fashioned classic houseplant with many varieties that bloom throughout the year.
- Norfolk pine: If you're looking for a live tree to keep indoors for Christmas, this is nontoxic to dogs and cats. After the holidays, it can be planted outside or kept as a houseplant.

Not everyone on your gift list is a pet owner. For those who live pet-free, these classic holiday plants are beautiful and safe-ish, only if you don't have pets, but if you do, keep them far away where pets can't reach them.

- Poinsettias are mildly toxic and can cause stomach upset.
- Amaryllis are dangerous for cats and dogs, causing vomiting and lethargy.
- Mistletoe and Holly are highly toxic and can cause severe reactions.
- Paperwhites or Narcissus have toxic bulbs if eaten.

For a special presentation, put the plant in a decorative pot or basket, add a card with watering and light instructions. For holiday pizzaz, add a natural twine or ribbon and a natural ornament to make it extra special. For festive, pet-safe, and sustainable gift-giving, visit your local nursery. You'll be shopping and supporting small local businesses, making your green-ish gift even greener.

WHY DO WE EAT TURKEY & CRANBERRIES AT THANKSGIVING?

By Teri Marenger, Member of Auburn Garden Club



Today, our Thanksgiving tables are laden with turkey, stuffing, veggies of all sorts, and of course, pumpkin pie, but in 1621, the Pilgrims' meal was much simpler, with wild fowl (possibly ducks or geese), venison from the Wampanoag people, corn, nuts, and seafood such as lobster and clams!

There is no real evidence that turkey was actually even served at the first feast; it became popular later only because wild turkeys were abundant and well-suited for large gatherings. If you want a traditional menu, try history-inspired dishes like goose, chestnuts, corn, and succotash!

And what about the cranberries? While native cranberries grew wild then, there was no record of them being served -- although they were a significant part of the Wampanoags' fall diet -- beans, pumpkins, squashes, and corn (which were often served as bread or porridge) were also part of the meal thanks to the Wampanoags, seasoned gardeners who employed the Three Sisters method for growing their main crops.

So, even though the tradition of eating turkey and cranberry on Thanksgiving does not originate from the first celebration in 1621, wild turkeys did live in North America then and eventually became the centerpiece for our Thanksgiving meals over time!

Here's to wishing us all a wonderful Holiday Season and enjoying time creating new memories with family and friends! We are all blessed to be in community together.

Here is a delicious cranberry recipe from a blog I did almost 10 years ago. The website isn't used anymore, but the recipe sure is! https://upbeetliving.com/the-best-ever-holiday-cranberry-recipe/



‘TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND ALL THROUGH THE YARD

By Karen Geisler, based on the poem by Clement Clark Moore



‘Twas the Night before Christmas and All Through the Yard,

Not a plant was left standing, the ground it was hard.
The tools were all hung in the garage with care
A well-deserved rest now that the garden was bare.

The bulbs were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of springtime danced in their heads,
I in my Snuggie, my husband with our cat
Had just settled in for a long winter’s chat.

When out in the hydrangeas there arose such a clatter,
I dropped my seed catalogs to see what was the matter.
Away to the front door I quickly dashed,
Half expecting to find my yard had been trashed.

When I opened the door, it was suddenly clear,
Here was a sleigh and eight tiny reindeer
With a little old gardener so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!

More quickly than crabgrass his coursers they came
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name.
“Now Holly, Now Ivy, Now Daisy and Rue!
On Rose, On Petunia, Fern, and Lily, too!

To the top of the trellis! To the top of the wall!
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!”
So up to the housetop the reindeer they flew
With a sleighful of gifts and St. Nicholas, too.

I closed the front door and was turning around
When he slid down the chimney, hitting the ground.
He was dressed all in red, with Wellies on his feet,
And a poinsettia on his cap made him look really neat.

He stood up quite quickly and went straight to his work
With a composter for Cathy, a Dutch weeder for Dirk.
There were asters for Ann, a pine tree for Paul
And a garden design book for use by us all.

Next came a rain barrel. This was for Rob.
And finally, for me, a ginkgo key fob.

Then laying a trowel aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

He ran to his sleigh and gave a quick whistle
And away they all flew like the seeds of globe thistle.
But I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight,

“Merry Christmas to all gardeners and to all a good night.”

HOW CAN CGCI HELP YOUR CLUB?

By Shelley Sparks, Calendar Chairman



Every club wants to bring as many people as possible to its revenue-producing events. Exciting public events can also be a wonderful way to attract attention and introduce potential new members to your club.

One of the easiest ways to publicize your events is to put them on the **CGCI calendar**.

Posting your event on the CGCI calendar gives other garden clubs throughout California an opportunity to see what you are doing and, hopefully, come out and support you. It also works the other way around. If you are visiting another part of the state, you can check the calendar and discover wonderful garden club events that you might want to attend. It gives you a front-row seat to what is happening throughout our garden club community.

So, what kinds of events should you post?

Flower shows, gala events, holiday parties, dedications, special programs—really, any event that is open to the public that you would like other garden club members and the public to know about. Events that are not eligible for the calendar are events that are sponsored by clubs or groups that are not part of the CGCI family.

And now for the **how**.

There are two ways you can post an event on the calendar. One is to go to the website and then to the calendar button. That will take you to a page that shows a button that says, "Submit an Event." Fill in all of the boxes and then hit "Submit Event" at the bottom of the page. From there, the event will be sent to me, and I will review it for completeness and publish it if everything is correct.

If this process feels too intimidating, you can send me your event details—the **who, what, where, and when**—including a contact name and email. If your event is listed on a website, please include the URL. I will review and post it on the CGCI calendar for you.

If your event is of interest beyond California, I can also submit it for consideration on the National Garden Clubs, Inc. calendar.

I see this as another way that I can support you and your clubs. But there is an even bigger benefit. When people visit our website, I want them to see an organization that is active, vibrant, and exciting—an organization with clubs doing interesting things all across the state.

So please, let me help you get the word out. **The more we share what we are doing, the more people will know about the wonderful things our garden clubs have to offer.**

Thank you for all that you do.

ATTENTION: NGC CONSULTANTS

By Greg Pokorski, Gardening School Chairman



National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) Consultants are required to refresh their Consultant status at least every five years. **If your Good Standing Date is December 31, 2026, time is running out to refresh this year.** You must either refresh or request an extension by December 31 or your Consultant status will lapse. Master Consultants are eligible to request Emeritus status if they are unable to refresh.

NGC asks Consultants to keep track of their own records, but if you are in doubt about your status or Good Standing Date, check with the CGCI School Chairman for your school: Cynthia Jackson for Environmental School; Greg Pokorski for Gardening School; Alexis Slafer for Landscape Design School. Email addresses are found on the CGCI website under the "Member Education/Member Benefits" tab.

Check School listings on the NGC website for refresher opportunities. Zoom courses provide an alternative to in-classroom courses.

Don't let your Consultant status lapse!

2025-2027 PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

By Barbara Weiler, Chairman

CULTIVATING THE ROOTS OF SUCCESS ABRAXAS HIGH SCHOOL GARDEN — ABRAXAS ORCHARD

Donations recently received include:

- **Carol Vallens**
- **Alice Lewin**
- **Robin Pokorski**
- **Folsom Garden Club**
- **Pioneer Garden Club**
- **Southern California Garden Club**
- **San Fernando Valley District**
- **CGCI in memory of CGCI Past President Krystal Migliore**

Total funds raised to date is $31,446!

To donate, please see the CGCI website: President's Project 2025-2027 - California Garden Club or https://www.californiagardenclubs.com/presidents-project-2025-27/.

PENNY PINES PROGRAM

By Terry Sampson, Chairman

Penny Pines Donations
September 2026 Report
2026 Donations to Date: $26,452.00

ARBORATUM DISTRICT
Year Around Garden Club
H: Piedad Gardia $68
H: Mary Casanova $68
H: Kathleen King $68
H: AnnMarie Nastasi $68
H: Linda Costley $68
H: Mona Koyle $68
M: John Zimmermann $68
M: Shelly Knapp Black $68
M: Debbie Green $68
M: Terry Salmans $68
M: Kathy Bias Bostic $68
M: Mick Neekham $68

CASCADE DISTRICT
Redding Wonderland Garden Club
M: Carolyn Griffith $68
M: Allen Thornburg $68

DIABLO FOOTHILLS DISTRICT
Blackhawk Bloomers Garden Club
M: Brooks Brodsky $68
M: Brooks Brodsky $68
Clayton Valley Garden Club
H: Kara Mullane $68

MONTANA DE ORO DISTRICT
Cayucos Garden Club
H: Jim Watts $68

ORANGE COUNTY DISTRICT
Anaheim Garden Club
H: Catherine Westerberg $68
Del Norte Garden Club
M: Pat Porter $68

PALMS TO PINES DISTRICT
"A" Garden Club of Big Bear Valley $68
Coachella Valley Plumeria Society
M: LtCol Alfred I. Clayes Jr., USMC, Retired $68

PALOMAR DISTRICT
Fallbrook Garden Club
H: Mia Cyr $68

ROADRUNNER DISTRICT
Hesperia Garden Club
M: Jackie the Eagle $68

SACRAMENTO RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT
Arden Park Garden Club
H: Carol Dependahl-Ripperda, Corinne Liseno, Diane Chappelle-Roach, Eileen Bowling, Judy Marrs, Katherine Raya-Krantz $68
H: Kathy Olsen, Larry Liseno, Laurel Clark, Margaret Ahern, Mary Czech, Mary Jane Sutliff $68
H: Nancy Fowler, Pat Stokes, Patti Ramos, Peggy Ramos, Sharon Ramos $68
Elk Grove Garden Club $136

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY DISTRICT
Southern California Garden Club
H: Jane Gordon $68
H: Andy Lipkis $68
M: Wendy Ashenbrenner $68
H: Bette Tang $68

Sunshine Garden Club of Santa Clarita Valley $476
Toluca Lake Garden Club $816

SANTA CLARA VALLEY DISTRICT
Green Thumb Garden Club of Milpitas
H: Roseann Costabile $136

SEQUOIA FOOTHILLS DISTRICT
Hanford Garden Club
M: Betty Kolander $68
M: Maria Sousa $68
M: Elsie Oliveira $68
M: Linda Barnhart $68

VALLEY LODE DISTRICT
Escalon Farmington Community Garden Club
H: Aldah Johnson $68
H: Dee Ann Blowers $68
Oakdale Garden Club
M: Kristi Reeves-Reyna $136
Patterson Garden Club
M: Dan Collier $68
Valley Lode District
H: Woodsy Owl $68
H: Paul Elias, VLD Director $68
H: Laura Fortune $68
H: Judy Sheppmann $68
H: Beverly Ensley $68

MISCELLANEOUS
Branches of Freedom C.S.S.C.A.R $68



AWARDS PROGRAM

By Pat Clayes, Chairman



It's that time of year again – award entry submittals.

Please see the Awards Manual on the CGCI website under the "Awards" tab. The following award entries must be submitted by **December 1**:

#1. COMMUNITY IMPACT
#2. BLUE STAR/GOLD STAR MARKER LANDSCAPING
#3. CIVIC DEVELOPMENT
#6 MEMORIAL PLANTING
#11 ACHIEVEMENT FOR A SINGLE EVENT
#14 GARDEN THERAPY
#16 MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION
#22 CONTAINER GARDENING
#23 EDIBLE GARDENING
#25 WILDFLOWER
#29 RAISED BED GARDENING
FLOWER SHOW AWARDS (PRGC 14 & 15 and NGC #FS-1 to FS-16)
#38 FLORAL DESIGN PROGRAM AWARD
#50 NEWSLETTERS
#51 PUBLICATIONS
#52 SOCIAL MEDIA — FACEBOOK
#53 WEBSITE
#54 & #55 YEARBOOKS
#65 ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH GARDEN CLUB
PRGC #21 NATIONAL GARDEN WEEK
PRGC #22 ARBOR DAY PROGRAM
ANY NGC AWARD WITH NO CORRESPONDING CGCI AWARD

Please note that NGC has revised its Awards Handbook for 2026. A list of revisions (compiled by me) can be found on our website under the "Awards" tab. If you are applying for CGCI's Container Gardening Award #22, please see the changes that NGC has made in case your entry wins first place and can be forwarded to NGC for national competition. NGC now requires that the selection of the container enhances the location; the selection of plants is appropriate for the container, location, and environmental conditions; and that it is located in an area visible to the community. A plan for seasonal maintenance as appropriate should be included.

If you have any questions about awards, please contact me.

YOUTH CONTESTS



Please see the Youth Contest Manual on the CGCI website. There are 5 contests for youth.

All entries (except for the Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Contest) are due **December 1**.

Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest entries are due **January 20**.